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For Immediate Release
May 4, 2006

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Senate votes to expand value added agriculture program

LANSING – Legislation that would help more people in the agriculture industry benefit from money in the 21st Century Jobs Fund was approved by the Senate today, said Sen. Michelle McManus.

Senate Bill 1168, sponsored by McManus, offers a grant and low-interest loan program that would leverage private sector funding to accelerate the development and expansion of value added agriculture.

“As Michigan’s second largest industry, agriculture is a vital and innovative part of our state’s economy,” said McManus, R-Lake Leelanau. “This legislation would help the 21st Century Jobs Fund money benefit more individuals and groups in the industry. The funding will go to help members of the agricultural community who are looking to expand their business through tourism or new products.”

The grants and loans will help businesses launch new products or expand their business. Examples include setting themselves up as an agri-tourism destination, marketing organic products or producing and selling other specialty products.

Value added agriculture is a process of increasing the economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity. It is an alternative production and marketing strategy where a farmer is not only involved in production of a raw commodity but also takes part in processing, and distribution of the product. Examples of value added agriculture includes food processing, drying, canning, juicing, handcrafting, unique packaging, labeling and marketing.

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